with effect from 9.10.1991.

Revision of Bench Mark Price of Natural Rubber

319. SHRI P.C. THOMAS: Will the Minister of COMMERCE to be pleased to state:

(a) whether the cost of production of natural rubber has escalated after its Bench Mark Price was last revised and fixed;

(b) if so, to what extent; and

(c) the steps taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to revise the Bench Mark Price to ensure remunerative price to cultivations?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c). The Bench Mark Price of Natural Rubber was last fixed at Rs. 2,145/- per Quintal for RMA-4 Grade of rubber on 15th January, 1991 on the basis of the report submitted by the Cost Accounts Branch of the Ministry of Finance during 1990-91 after a study conducted by them taking into account the cost of wages and other inputs.There was a substantial increase of nearly Rs. 4,000/- per ton effected in the Bench Mark price at that time. Unless another assessment is made regarding the cost of production of natural rubber, it would not be possible to indicate the extent to which the cost of production of natural rubber has escalated since January, 1991. The Government have been taking necessary steps to ensure remunerative prices to the cultivators including procurement of natural rubber as a measure of price support.

Shortage of Uniform items for N.C.C. Cadets

320. SHRI DATTATRAYA BANDARU: Will the Minister of DEFENCE to be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is an acute shortage of uniform items for the N.C.C. Cadets;

(b) if so, the extent of shortage and the number of cadets affected; and

(c) the remedial measures taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to overcome this shortage?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENCE (SHRI SHARAD PAWAR): (a) and (b). While there is no shortage of polyester cotton white shorts and polyester cotton khaki bush shirts, there are some shortages in the other items of uniform. Deficiency in the availability of uniforms is managed by issuing lesser number of items to the Cadets till deliveries in respect of supply orders placed on the DGS&D start materialising

(c) Indents for the provision of uniform items in bulk have already been placed with the Directorate General of Supplies and Disposal.

Excise Duty on Cottage Industries

321. SHRI DATTATRAYA BANDARU: Will the Minister of FINANCE to be pleased to state:

(a) whether cottage industries are exemted from excise duty;

(b) whether hand made panel doors and windows fall under the category of cottage industries;

(c) if so, whether 30 per cent excise duty was imposed on these items in the 1991 budget; and

(d) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI RAMESHWAR THAKUR) : (a) and (b). Hand made